"For Richer, for Poorer."

BY EDITH C. KENYON, AUTHOR OF "THE MOTHERS OF ILLUSTRIOUS MEN," ETC.

"He fell down at her feet, and she thought that he was dead." *p.* 179.

CHAPTER XI.

RUINED.

"YOU'RE a fine fellow, you are!" said Dick, playfully, tossing little Robin up in the air, before leaving home one morning, six weeks afterwards; "oh, and you're clever enough, too, my boy! Some day you will learn how to make money like papa. Yes, you'll learn fast enough."

Annie shivered slightly, but did not interfere. She looked pale and a little sad as she sat behind the silver breakfast service which had been one of her husband's latest presents to her.

"Mate money lite papa?" lisped little Robin; "oh, but I tan now, papa. I tan mate money."

"Nonsense, rascal! *You* can't make money," said Dick, shaking his head at him as he set him down on the floor.

"But I tan, papa, I tan," cried the child, standing in exact imitation of his father's posture; "I did yesterday, didn't I, May?"

"Yes," said Mary, raising her lovely little face to look triumphantly at her father, "he did, papa."

It was Mary's birthday, and so the children had all been breakfasting with their parents instead of in the large nursery upstairs with the nurse.

"He did?" cried Dick. "Pray, sir,"—addressing Robin—"how did you do it?"

"I dave Jattie a ha'penny for his penny," said Robin, in exultant tones.

"Well done, Robin!" cried his father, patting him on the back and laughing, but without looking at his wife.

He went out of the room, and, after a few moments' thought, Annie called the little boy to her.

"Was it kind to poor Jackie to take his penny away and only give him a halfpenny for it?" she asked.

"Would Robin have liked it if Jackie had done so to him?"

"No, mamma; but *I* sudn't have let him. *Jattie* sudn't have let me."

"But he is such a little boy. He did not understand."

Robin hung his head. The reproach in his mother's tone cut him to the heart. He sought for some excuse for his conduct, but could not find any.

Little Mary, however, as her custom was, became Robin's champion. "*Papa* said 'Well done!'" she remarked emphatically.

Two great tears stole down Annie's cheeks. What could she say to that? How could she train her children aright when their father led them wrong?

"Papa looked at it in one way and I look at it in another," she said, rather lamely; "and perhaps papa was not thinking of poor little Jackie just then."

"Poor 'ittle Jattie," said Robin, in the tenderest tones. "He's only a 'ittle boy. I'll dive him his penny adain, mamma."

"That's right. That is my *good* boy. And nursie shall take you all out to buy some sweeties."

When the children had gone out for their daily walk Annie busied herself with household matters for a while, and then, finding it necessary to do some shopping, put on her bonnet and cloak, and went out into the town.

It was a clear, frosty day, and the streets and shops were thronged with people. As Annie waited in a draper's shop until the busy shopman could attend to her, she heard two ladies, who were standing together, also waiting, mention her husband's name, and, her attention being attracted, she listened to what followed.

"I, too, wish my husband had never seen that Mr. Briscoe," one of the ladies said in low, distressed tones. "You see, men think him so clever—he's risen so quickly from being just nobody to being so rich and living in that large house; and all that sort of thing made people think they could trust him with their money. I know he led my husband to buy shares in that wretched business."

"And now there is a smash?" questioned her companion.

"Yes, now there is a most awful smash. The Company has failed. The Directors have disappeared, and there is ruin on all sides—utter ruin."

Annie opened her lips to speak. She wished to inquire what was meant by those words, but no sound proceeded from her mouth. Sick and giddy, she leaned against the back of her chair, and for a few seconds heard no more.

When she came to herself the ladies had gone, and the shopman, with much concern, was handing her a glass of water.

"I'm afraid you are ill, ma'am," he said respectfully.

"Thank you. I'm better now," replied Annie.

She made a trifling purchase and left the shop.

In the street two men talking in excited tones about some great swindle passed her. Annie's knees seemed to give way beneath her; she could not walk, and so turned into a public Art Gallery, near which she happened to be, and sank down on a seat.

But even there she could not be quiet. As she closed her eyes, to shut out the busy world for a few moments from her mind, a lady and boy, who came up immediately after her, concluded that she was asleep, and so stood talking, in low but distinct tones, about a large picture opposite.

"Look, Harry," said the lady, "that is Sir Noel Paton's famous picture of the man with the muckrake. See the poor wretch trying to rake together that rubbish on the floor and never once looking up, though above him an angel holds a crown which he might wear, and another angel is touching his shoulder to attract his attention."

"Why doesn't he look up?" asked the boy.

"Because to his mind the rubbish on the floor is more attractive," said the other; "strange as it seems, he would rather have it than the crown."

"You stupid old thing!" cried the boy, impatiently. "Mother, isn't he a fool?"

"Yes. He is, indeed. But the picture has a great meaning."

"What meaning, mother? Explain, please."

"Like that man are all those who plot and plan and strive and toil to obtain the money and the riches of this world, and meanwhile forget, or do not care to see, God's angels holding out for them far better things."

"Why did you bring me here to-day?" asked the boy, quickly.

"Because to-day we are all ruined so far as money is concerned," said the other, calmly. "Your Uncle Harry has been like that man with the muckrake for years, scraping together what he called a fortune. Then he put it, as you will learn by-and-by, into the hands of a Company who have stolen it all from him. We are poor to-day, Harry. But I am glad, glad of it, for now your uncle will see how vain and fleeting that was which he valued so highly, and will have time to think of the angels and the crown."

The wondering boy made some exclamation, and they went on. Then Annie rose and looked at the picture, noting the careworn face and the eager look of cupidity in the man's eyes, as he bent anxiously over the straws and rubbish he was collecting. She saw, too, the shining crown and the beautiful angels, who were all unheeded by him, and the lady's words returned to her mind, "We are poor to-day—but I am glad, glad of it, for now your uncle will see how vain was that which he valued so highly, and will have time to think of the angels and the crown."

"I am glad, too," said Annie to herself, "for *Dick*, too, will now see how vain was that which *he* valued so highly, and will have time to think of the angels and the crown."

That thought gave her strength to walk home, where, by some accident, the morning's papers had not arrived before her husband went out, and she never looked at them until later in the day herself. When she came into the house she saw Dick's hat on the hall table, and so went at once to his study, and found him half lying across his writing-table in an attitude of utter despair. He looked up, with wild, bloodshot eyes, as she entered, and gave a little cry of exceeding bitterness.

Annie closed the door and ran to him quickly. As she did so, he endeavoured to conceal something he was hiding in his hand.

Tremblingly the poor wife caught hold of that hand and perceived in it a small bottle half full of liquid.

"Dick!" she exclaimed, in the greatest distress. "Oh, Dick!"

"I am *ruined*," he replied, in accents of despair; "*ruined! ruined!* And I have used other people's money, *and ruined them.*"

Annie fell on her knees beside him.

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CHAPTER XII.

"FOR POORER."

"WE are nearly there now, Dick. I am afraid the shaking gives you pain. But we are nearly home."

Dick looked at his wife with the unhappy, appealing look of one who is half paralysed. "I can bear it," he said slowly, and speaking with a little difficulty. "But what a coming home!"

"And yet it is better than it was last time," said Annie, remembering their return to Ivy Cottage after her stay at Ilkley, when he had told her of his dismissal from the bank, and his determination to try and gain money by "other ways," which she knew to be unsafe and even wicked.

They were driving slowly in a cab to Ivy Cottage, which, through the great kindness and self-sacrifice of Annie's brother and sister, had been again taken and plainly furnished for them. Dick had been very ill. He was struck down with paralysis in his own study, whilst he was trying to explain to Annie how it was this utter ruin had come upon them and others. The bitterness of his grief was so great that it seemed as if his body could not bear it. He fell down at her feet, and at first she thought that he was dead. For weeks his life was despaired of, but now the doctors said that he might live for years, though it was exceedingly doubtful whether he would ever regain the use of his right side.

Through all the inquiry which had been made about the failure of the large company that called itself the Matford Investment Company, in which he was mixed up, he had been unable to appear, but later had signed a statement about it, which had been drawn up by his lawyer. Dick was not a director, though he had been an active agent of the company, which had simply taken people's money and gambled with it on the Stock Exchange. His name and influence had been considerable amongst a certain set of his townspeople, and, induced by him, they invested largely in the shares. For the money of some of these he had recklessly held himself responsible, and so, while he was ill, everything that he possessed was sold, and ten shillings in the pound paid to his creditors.

Gerald had formerly borrowed some money of him, but when Annie tried to obtain it she found he had disappeared with everything that he possessed. Since then they had heard nothing of him. He it was who led Dick into his evil ways, but in the matter of the Matford Investment Company he had not been guilty. With his usual cleverness, he had seen that it would fail, and had not therefore joined it. Indeed, he warned Dick about it, but in vain.

"Here we are!" said Annie, cheerfully, as the cab stopped before the little garden gate at Ivy Cottage.

"We've got a chair ready for him," said Jack, putting his lively head into the cab. "You get out, Annie, and I and Robin will lift him into it. Then we'll carry him in, in grand style."

Annie got out and found herself locked in Bessie's arms. It was nearly dark. No one appeared to be in the quiet street, except the cabman, who was busy with the boxes.

"Welcome home, darling," said Bessie, tenderly. "The boys"—she still called them boys, although they were both men—"have got a nice invalid's chair for Dick. The children and Jane are all here, in great delight at being once more in the old home."

"How can I thank you enough, Bessie?" began Annie.

"Oh, don't try. I'm so *glad* to have you here again."

In half an hour they were all sitting round a bright and prettily arranged tea-table—all, that is, except Dick, who lay on a couch by the fire, with a small table before him. The room was decorated with holly berries and green leaves, for it was Christmas Eve. And cheerful and even merry were the young voices as they planned a happy future.

"I shall give you half my salary, Dick," said Jack, "for a while at least, until you have had time to turn round. I shall come and pay the sum regularly every month to you or Annie, so you will be able to rely upon it."

"And I shall pay your rent and Jane's wage, and give you a little cheque now and then, Annie, until you get straight," said Robin, in his kind, thoughtful way.

Bessie said nothing, but her eyes rested lovingly upon her sister's pale, careworn face, and then with pity upon her helpless brother-in-law.

"I shall be often in and out," she said at length. And they all knew she meant more than the words implied. When she was there Annie's family could not be in want.

"I cannot thank you," said Dick, in his broken voice; "you are all too kind. It cuts me to the heart," and he wept.

Annie rose and wiped the tears away. "Don't, dear," she said. "It will do you harm; and, do you know," she added cheerfully, "it makes me glad to see them all so truly unselfish. And they are all prospering. They can afford to be generous."

"Of course we can," cried Jack—"that is the happy result of our hard work; we have good incomes, and a prospect of even better ones in the future."

"Ah, Jack. If only I had been like you! If only I had worked hard at some honest trade!" sighed Dick.

"Cheer up, Dick," said Robin; "when you get well I'll give you plenty of work in the shop—if you won't mind taking it," he added.

"Mind! I should be only too thankful. But I fear, Robin, that it would do your business no good if people saw I was mixed up with it. My character will always be against me here."

The others tried to say what they could to comfort him, declaring that he must "live it down," meaning that odium which had gathered round his name. Bnt for some time he refused to be comforted. "I have sinned," he said, "I have sinned against God and agaiust man, and I must bear the consequences—and the children. Ah! what shall I do for them?"

Thereupon these enthusiastic young people each promised that he or she would provide for one child, that is, supposing the parents were unable. Bessie promised that Mary's future should be her care, and the brothers each said the same for the boy named after him.

Annie and Dick tried to thank them, but broke down, and, thinking they would like to be alone, the others soon left them for their own home.

Jane brought the children in to say good night, and Annie thought of her little Dickie, who used to play in that very room, and whose last words were, "Tell Dada doyful."

When they were alone again she reminded Dick of this, adding that the troubles of this world would not last for ever, and that they might be only meant to prepare them for the joys of heaven.

"If only I had lived differently when I was well and strong!" sighed poor Dick, remorsefully. "I don't know how I could have been so infatuated."

"It was as if you were blinded—blinded by the god of this world, Mammon," rejoined Annie, and then she told him about the picture in the Art Gallery of the man with the muckrake, and what the lady had said about it.

"I was just like that man," he said, penitently; "and you, Annie, were my good angel, to whom I wouldn't listen."

"I sometimes think," said Annie, humbly, "if mine had been a stronger character, more like Bessie's, I might have taken some decided step which would have constrained you to do right."

"Bessie was not very successful in her attempt to do it," he said.

"Oh, well, Bessie, with the best and warmest heart in the world, has a hasty temper and has not much tact sometimes——"

"I won't hear a word against Bessie," interrupted Dick. "She is the *best* woman in the world except you, my dear. Do you know, she did not tell Mr. Morrison about my gambling. He called one day when you were out and had a very kind talk with me. And he said it was Mr. Templeton who told him; he had learnt it from his son, who had lately joined our club. I wronged Bessie in thought and deed. Yet see what kindnesses she has showered upon us! Jack says she sold her little bit of Great Western that she might furnish this place for us."

"And what do you think?" said Annie. "She has got me some pupils. Yes, really, an old school friend of ours told her she was coming to live in the next street, and should want a governess for her four children, and Bessie persuaded her to let them come and learn their lessons with my children. I shall teach them all, and Sophy, that is Mrs. Maxfield, will pay me a nice weekly sum for it."

"My poor wife!" Dick looked pitifully at her, thinking how he had always longed to give her everything that money could buy, and now she was to be the bread-winner, while he was laid aside.

Just then the Christmas Waits began to sing outside—

"Hark! the herald angels sing,
'Glory to the new-born King!'"

Husband and wife listened until the song was ended and the Waits had gone further on, then Dick said, in a low voice, "He shall be *my King*. I made a mess of my life when I tried to govern it myself, and laid aside the thought of Him and the strict observance of His laws. Now things shall be different. I am only a poor weak creature, and God knows whether I shall ever be able to walk again. But He shall be my King, and shall reign over my heart and life henceforth, for ever and ever."

And Annie softly whispered, "Amen."

Outside, the snow fell noiselessly, and away in the distance the Waits were singing—

"Oh, may we keep and ponder in our mind,
God's wondrous love in saving lost mankind;
Trace we the Babe who hath retrieved our loss,
From His poor manger to His bitter cross,
Tread in His steps, assisted by His grace,
Till man's first heavenly state again takes place."

THE END.

*** *Our next number will contain the opening chapters of a charming* NEW SERIAL STORY *entitled* "MISTRESS OF THE SITUATION," *by* JENNIE CHAPPELL, *with a beautiful original illustration.*

CHRISTMAS BELLS.

DEAR are the sounds of the Christmas chimes
In the land of the ivied towers,
And they welcome the dearest of festival times
In this Western world of ours.
Bright on the holly and mistletoe bough
The English firelight falls,
And bright are the wreathed evergreens now
That gladden our own home walls.
And hark! the first sweet note that tells
The welcome of the Christmas bells.

They are ringing to-night through the Norway firs,
And across the Swedish fells,
And the Cuban palm-tree dreamily stirs
To the sound of those Christmas bells!
They ring where the Indian Ganges rolls
Its flood through the rice-fields wide;
They swell the far hymns of the Laps and Poles
To the praise of the Crucified.
Sweeter than tones of the ocean's shells
Mingle the chimes of the Christmas bells.

The years come not back that have circled away
With the past of the Eastern land,
When He plucked the corn on the Sabbath day,
And healed the withered hand;
But the bells shall join in a joyous chime
For the One who walked the sea,
And ring again for the better time
Of the Christ that is to be;
Then ring! for the earth's best promise dwells
In ye, O joyous prophet bells!

A STIRRING INCIDENT.

WHO amongst us cannot remember the delight of stirring the Christmas pudding? In days that now seem very far away, when the pudding was in course of preparation we used to grumble sometimes a little bit at having to help mother stone the plums; but the promise that we should have a stir at the delicious mixture later on, sent the frowns away, and made willing helpers of us all. Nobody seems to know exactly wherein lies the charm of this particular stir, but it exists all the same. Is it not a pity, then, that the custom is less common than it used to be? It takes so little to please the bairns, and however busy Mother may be, it would not hinder her much to let each of her boys and girls have a stir when the pudding is in the mixing pan. Let there be a little bit of merry ceremony about it, too; so that the children shall remember in after years the joyous fun they had in the kitchen of the old home long ago, when Mother—gone hence, perhaps, by that time—bade them stir the Christmas Pudding.

CROTCHETY CHILDREN.

BY A SUPERANNUATED GOVERNESS.

III.—THE IMAGINATIVE CHILD.

NOW, if I were obliged to speak out, I do believe I should say that the imaginative child is about the most difficult one in the world to manage. When I say manage, I do not merely mean the keeping things comfortable for the grown-up part of the world which the expression implies to most people.

"Dear me," I can hear some poor woman say, "children are necessary evils, everyone knows that; but you seem to want to make them the most important people in the world." Well, so I do, my friend. Just turn the matter round a minute. You are—well, we will say thirty, because people are sensitive about their age, and having one or two corns of my own, I would not on any account tread on yours. You had a happy childhood, a good education, a happy young womanhood, and then you married a man who loved you and could give you a comfortable home.

Now, would all that have happened if your parents had looked upon you as "a necessary evil," and been content with doing just as much as the law of this world enforces, without adding the extras which the law of the next world advises? "These ought you to have done and not to leave the other undone." "These"—judgment, mercy, and faith—all that go to make a child a Christian, a worthy citizen of the kingdom of God. "The other"—tithe of mint, anise, and cummin—reading, writing, and arithmetic, with as much other knowledge as the child may be induced to imbibe in order to make him a certificated scholar and a worthy citizen of the kingdoms of this world.

Believe me, the children are the most important people in this life. "Prevention is better than cure." Let us train them properly, and we shall reduce crime and unhappiness in the next generation.

It is an awful responsibility to be a parent. It seems to me that for the most part there are three classes of parents. One ignores the responsibility altogether, and lets the children drag each other up, with the casual assistance of the Board school teachers; the other recognises responsibility, and hands it over to a private governess or tutor at a "select" school; and these two far outnumber the third class, which recognises in every child a trust from the Lord, for which it will have to give an account. "Evils" children would never be if we did our duty towards them, praying for them from the moment of their birth—aye, and before it too.

Dear me, I am afraid I have let my hobby run away with me again. Let us make haste back to the imaginative child.

How provoking he can be to his matter-of-fact elders, especially if he isn't he at all, but a girl, from whom her hard-worked mother would fain get some help. Roughly speaking, what does the imaginative child do? He lives for the most part in a little world of his own, coming down to the matter-of-fact things of every-day home-life with a shock like that from a shower bath. You tell him to order onions; he brings home carrots, because his mind was far away when you gave him the commission.

You leave him to watch the sleeping baby, and he sits down carefully by the side of the cradle with a book of marvels on his knee; he lets the fire die out, or the kettle boil over, and reads blissfully on while the cat licks up the meal of bread and milk which you had stood on the fender to keep warm for the poor little baby. He spends so many regrets on the imaginary troubles and hairbreadth escapes of his heroes that he has none to give to your every-day worries. If he is a tender-hearted fellow who wants to be good, he will probably be a capital example of the wise saying, "A man may long and long to be an angel till he forgets that he is a man."

An imaginative girl is perhaps even more trying, for no one expects a boy to be of much use in a house. I don't see why this should be so, but it is. Boys are supposed always to come in with muddy boots, always to leave the door open, and if they shut it at all it must be with a slam; but personally I fail to see why boys should be more unpleasant than girls, unless we make them so.

The imaginative girl is, I own, a trial, and one's natural impulse is to do a thing oneself instead of asking her to do it. "Polly's always up in the skies," a mother once said to me; "you will find it very difficult to bring her down to every-day things." And so I did, but I managed it at last.

Remember one thing, if you have any of these imaginative children, as a rule they have greater capacity for good or for evil than the others. It rests with you which road they tread. Don't clip their wings too much. They are the eagles of this world, and it is natural for them to soar above their fellows. Don't try to crush the imaginative spirit out of them; teach them to use it rightly, and feed it properly. Read they will, from the time they have conquered the mysteries of words; before that they will merely dream. See that you do not deprive them of their pleasures, but be careful to guide them in their choice of books.

Let the imaginative child be encouraged to spend a certain time every day in bodily exercise. If it is a girl, let her do some easy house-work; give her your room to dust; give her charge of a certain branch of the cooking; give her what you like, only let it be understood that it is a treat, not a task. She will like it then, and as she dusts, or sweeps, or cooks she will renew some of the waste of nerve tissue which is going on at a fearful rate with every imaginative man, woman, and child. I don't know whether there ever was a fat poet? I never knew of one.

Encourage your child to tell you his ideas and plans. Happy is the little one—imaginative, sulky, or passionate—whose one final court of appeal is "mother."

"ONE OF THE LEAST."

FOR a night and a day the snow had fallen softly and silently, the feathery flakes drifting against the cottage doors and lodging upon the window sills. Bleak and wintry, however, as Nature looked, there were both warmth and gladness within the walls of farmhouses and cottages, for the Christmas Eve had brought its tide of tenderness into many a human heart.

In the kitchen of the Grange Farm a large fire was burning, and a woman seated in front of it evidently was plunged in deep and sad thought. Husband and little girl had gone down to the village shop to buy a cake for the Christmas tea, and in her loneliness she was thinking of a tiny grave beneath the snow, where her curly-headed little lad had been laid to rest since the spring.

"It's our first Christmas without little Will," she whispered, as she arose and went to the window and gazed out; but she saw her husband and child coming down the lane in the moonlight, the old dog scampering delightedly in front, and she turned away with a sigh and dried the lingering tears, for she did not wish to awaken any sad memories in her husband's heart.

When he entered the room, however, it was easy to see that his thoughts were elsewhere, and he said softly, as he turned to the fire—"We've been a bit long, Lizzie and me; but after we'd been at the shop and got the cake and a toy or two, we turned up the road and went on a bit just to look at little Will's grave. Poor little chap! it's the first Christmas we've not had him with us, and his chair in the corner there has been reminding me of him all the day."

"He's hearing better carols to-night, Isaac, than we shall listen to," the woman said, quietly; "and if he's gone, it was the Lord that took him. I wouldn't bring him back now, though I am his mother."

She had scarcely finished speaking when a knock came to the door, and without waiting for an invitation a man entered. "Isaac," he said, "the carrier's cart hasn't come yet, and they're frightened some harm may have come to old Reuben and his little lad in the snow. Th' master thinks they may have got in a drift at the hollow below Scarsdale Wood, and he wants to know if you'll go with us to find them?"

"Yes, I'll go," answered the farmer, readily, "that is, if Jane there doesn't mind;" and no sooner was the wife's consent given than off the pair started.

Four hours passed, when all at once they came upon the old carrier nearly frozen to death in his cart, one wheel of which had come off in the drift. His little orphan grandson was in worse plight than himself, and the sturdy band of men tenderly carried them both over the moor to the village.

"I'll take the little chap home with me," Isaac said, as they neared the farmhouse. "Jane will look after him for a day or two, I know, and it will ease Reuben's mind to know he's cared for. The lad will want some nursing, and Mrs. Roberts will have enough to do to look after old Reuben."

A few minutes afterwards little Hugh, wrapped in a soft blanket and propped up by a large pillow, was seated in the farmer's armchair, and stretching out his hands towards the cosy fire. The tears came up into his eyes, he was so happy, what with the warmth, and, better still, with the loving, cheerful looks of the farmer and his wife.

He was not happier than Isaac and Jane, however, for from their hearts the love was welling up to the motherless little one.

Soon after breakfast sad tidings came. Poor old Reuben had died in the night. Bitterly the little lad cried when Isaac broke the news to him.

"He has not a relation left in the whole world, Hugh there hasn't," Isaac said, looking inquiringly at his wife.

"Poor little chap!" said Jane, as she reached across the table and took the lad's thin hand in hers; and then she added, "It might have been little Will instead."

"Ay," answered the farmer; "and if it had been, I wonder if anybody would have turned him out into the snow or sent him to the workhouse?"

Jane looked at him tearfully, but did not speak, and Hugh gazed from one to the other.

"It seems to me," Isaac resumed, "that we might take this little chap for good. We couldn't turn him out on a Christmas Day, could we?—and what we couldn't do on that day we shouldn't do on any day. Let's keep him."

"Yes," said Jane, readily, "let's keep him. I've been a bit hard lately brooding over my trouble, and maybe this little fellow in his loneliness has been sent to remind me that there is trouble and grief in the world besides my own. It's Christmas Day, Isaac; let us do this in Christ's name."

JAMES BOWKER.

Christmas Helps for Busy Housewives.

DECORATIONS.—Be sure to let all the little ones take part in the Christmas decorations. Do not be sparing with the evergreens, and seek to make an artistic whole, however humble your home. Pictures and tall furniture should be adorned by the elders, of course, but it will prove a happy occupation if the children are encouraged to make designs and illuminate cheery greetings.

Mince Meat.—One pound of currants, 1 lb. raisins, 1 lb. suet, ½ lb. apples, ½ lb. mixed peel, ¾ lb. sugar, half a nutmeg, mixed spice to taste, the juice of two lemons, and the rind of one grated, and essence of almonds to taste.

Good Christmas Pudding.—One pound stoned plums, 1 lb. currants, 1 lb. suet chopped fine, 2 lbs. flour, ½ lb. mixed peel, ½ oz. almonds chopped fine, 6 eggs well beaten with a little water, a small packet each of baking powder, egg powder, and mixed spice, and flavour with lemon or vanilla essence. Boil in a cloth or small basins for about eight hours.

Rice Cake.—Ingredients: ½ lb. castor sugar, ½ lb. ground rice, and 4 eggs. Method: Mix the rice and sugar together, well beat the eggs in separate basins, then add the mixture to the ground rice and sugar, beating well together till it bubbles. Bake in a rather hot oven a little over half an hour.

Christmas Fare.—Careful housekeepers should plan beforehand for the food required at Christmas-tide, otherwise great waste will result. It is often better to have a variety of meats and poultry than to pay heavy sums for one or two huge joints, which are not entirely eaten. It is also well to avoid over-rich dishes and strange, indigestible diet.

THE WEIGHT OF OUR CLOTHING.

BY MRS. I. L. RICHMOND, AUTHOR OF "THE CHILDREN'S SUNDAY," ETC.

IN these latter days, when women, as well as men, have to run to and fro upon the earth, it is unfortunate that we are so sadly weighed down with heavy clothes.

Especially is this the case in winter-time, when extra petticoats are surmounted by long cloaks or thick jackets, the accumulated weight being enough to drag the tired body to the earth; yet we must have warmth, so we unthinkingly "pile on the agony," and then wonder why, at the end of the day, we feel so terribly exhausted.

If we try to carry about, in the hand, for a quarter of an hour, an iron weight representing half the number of pounds which one's winter clothing weighs, we shall no longer be surprised at our own fatigue.

To remedy this common evil (which, as the doctors tell us, is often the cause of serious illness), we must adopt rational clothing, not necessarily of the patterns recommended by the society of that name, but more ordinary garments, of a light warm texture, so arranged that their weight is properly distributed, avoiding the injurious practice of hanging most of the weight from the hips, instead of the shoulders.

Woollen clothing, quite free from all cotton mixtures, is the best in every sense, being specially light and warm, while it allows the skin to do its duty in the right way, instead of retaining the poisonous gases which are constantly emitted by our pores, as cotton clothing does. The combined woollen under-garments now so much used, are excellent so far as they go, but it is usually the petticoats worn over them which are in fault, depending entirely, as they too often do, from the hips, and so causing injury to the digestive and other internal organs, from their heavy weight.

Shoulder-straps of stout elastic are easily added to the stays, with flat, large buttons on the hips, to which the under-petticoats or knicker-bockers can be attached; the shoulder-straps being made just short enough to lift the weight of these from the waist to the shoulders. But then comes the difficulty of the outer dress (often consisting of a jacket, blouse, and petticoat), the weight of a fashionable lined skirt (trimmed too, perhaps, with heavy material) being terrible indeed.

For walking, we may well take a hint from the Princess of Wales, who never wears the same skirt indoors and out, but has specially short and light walking dresses. Long, heavy skirts, if worn at all by busy women, should be kept for state occasions, when rest is more possible; the light woollen skirt, unlined and several inches off the ground, being invaluable for ordinary wear. A flannel body with a band, in the place of the usual petticoat body (with or without sleeves), can be worn in winter under the dress, to which this skirt can be buttoned, thus distributing its weight over the shoulders, or shoulder-straps of broad elastic can be attached to the skirt (crossing in front) so as to lift its weight from the hips.

Where a blouse is worn, ornamental shoulder-straps can be added, of the same material as the skirt, or a "Swiss body" with ribbon straps can be arranged, to which the skirt is sewn. This is a useful and pretty style for young girls, and as the injury done to their growing bodies by hanging a weight from the hips is specially serious, this point should always be considered in arranging their dress for the winter.

MOTHERS IN COUNCIL.

CONDUCTED BY MRS. E. M. WATERWORTH, AUTHOR OF "MOTHERS AT HOME," ETC.

December 2nd, 1895.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—A very happy Christmas to you all! Yes, I repeat it, to you *all*.

Is there a vacant chair which stands before you and makes you say, "There's no happiness for me this Christmas"? If so, pause a minute, my friend, and lift up your poor stricken heart to God. He will be Father, Mother, all that is dearest and best to you. Close your eyes until in fancy you can almost see the Christ-child in that empty chair, then kneel on, and pray on until you can feel that Jesus indeed is near you; and if He be near you and you realise His presence, then although the memory of the dear one gone before is not driven away (God forbid it should be), you will be able to feel happier than ever you did in your life before.

Thank God, to every one of us Christmas can bring happiness! What does it matter if the eyes grow dim, if the hair gets white, if friends pass away, if earthly treasures slip from our grasp? To every one, rich or poor, old or young, who loves our Master and tries, however feebly, to follow in His ways, Christmas can always bring peace and happiness which need never be taken away.

* * * *

"HOUSEWIFE" believes in doing good things as well as wishing them, so she writes for a recipe for cooking pig's fry, which is a favourite dish with her husband. Take my advice and, in spite of its name, which seems to demand it, don't fry it. Line an old pie-dish with thin, very thin slices of potato, next put a layer of the pig's fry, then a layer of onions, sliced very delicately; repeat the operation till the dish is full, taking care to finish with potatoes. Pour in sufficient water to come within an inch of the top, cover up the dish, and put it in a slow oven. Remove the cover about a quarter of an hour before serving, to brown the top of the potatoes. I suppose I ought to have said pepper and salt each layer, but I agree with a medical friend of mine, who says that he knows of nothing in the internal arrangements of man that requires pepper, and as to salt, although I like to have it in everything, I hate to taste it. Most cooks use too much salt to please

Five o'Clock Tea. (*Engraved by* C. Baude.)

me; it is so easy to add, so impossible to take away. And that's why I prefer cold weather to hot. You can make yourself warm, but you cannot make yourself cool, in our country at least. But that is quite by the way; I must return to business—only at Christmas even a poor Editress may be allowed a little liberty.

* * * *

My dear "BERTHA," I humbly apologise, and confess that you have caught me splendidly. You say that I gave ample directions last month as to preserving your hands, but that I never said a word about the other extremities, which give nearly as much trouble to people who are suddenly called upon to stand about all day. The only means I know of to alleviate that dreadful aching of the feet is to rub the inside of the foot of the stocking with yellow soap every morning; not a little bit, but a good thick coating. Bathe the feet daily, and put them up every instant you possibly can. Cultivate a habit of sitting down to as much of your work as possible, with your feet on a stool.

* * * *

"It never rains but it pours," and so it is quite natural that "Bertha's" letter should be closely followed by one from "JIM," who evidently wants to take care of his wife, who won't take care of herself. There is a charity called "The Surgical Aid Society," Salisbury Square, Fleet Street, London, especially designed to provide elastic stockings, etc., to those who need them and are unable to pay the usual heavy prices for them. If "JIM" writes to the secretary, he will get a paper telling him at what hours women must attend. Probably he may find some clergyman or doctor who can give him a ticket for his wife. If not, never mind; the people at Salisbury Square will put him in the way of getting stockings cheaply. One thing is certain, varicose veins must not be neglected.

* * * *

"POLLY."—I wonder whether I have heard from you before; I believe I have, at the beginning of the year.

So you are going to be married, and want me to give you any hints I can as to what things you should buy.

First, don't buy anything that will not be useful to you a year or two hence.

Secondly, don't buy fabrics of certain colours because they are fashionable. You must consult your looking-glass. If you have a bright, high-coloured complexion, don't buy bright, high-coloured materials for your dresses or hats. If you are stout, choose dark tints; if you are thin, and neither red nor white in colouring, you can wear pretty well what you like; but if you have what is rudely called a pasty complexion—and many a pretty girl has, mind you, so don't get huffed—then you must avoid all shades of yellow, light green, or terra-cotta.

In the same way, don't be led away by your dressmaker to have your dresses made in a way which will not suit your figure, however much they may suit the fashion. If you are short, you must not try to ignore the fact, and have your dresses and jackets cut after the manner of Miss Sixfooter; and if you are tall and thin, you can naturally carry a good deal more sail in the way of sleeves, etc., than little Miss Dumpy, who is almost as broad as she is long.

Finally, don't buy too many things—fashions change so quickly, and one tires of dresses after a time. It is better to start married life with a little reserve fund, so that you can buy something new and pretty from time to time. Husbands get more tired of seeing the same dress than wives do, I believe. At least, I know one who does.

* * * *

"MISS PRIM" is in distress about her umbrella. She cannot get it to roll up smoothly. Have you ever tried this plan? it was shown me not long ago at a well-known city warehouse. Hold the points of the ribs tightly together round the stick with one hand, while you twist the silk with the other. Of course, there's no harm in being a bit of a feminine dandy, dear "MISS PRIM," provided you are something else besides. The Iron Duke used to say that the dandies were his best officers.

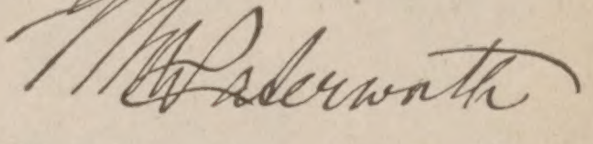
* * * *

Here is a capital recipe for nursery custard which "EMMA" has asked for, and which may be of use to many others who have either children or bilious relatives to cook for. Mix a dessert-spoonful of cornflour with a little cold milk, and beat one egg up well in a separate basin. Boil a pint of milk, and when just boiling turn it into the cornflour, mixing slowly; then add the beaten-up egg gradually to the milk and cornflour. Put all together again on the fire, and stir till it nearly boils—only nearly, mind! This custard with a nicely made apple-tart will make an agreeable variety in the Christmas fare.

* * * *

Certainly "MARY" should not open her husband's letters without permission. Such conduct is not a proof, but an *abuse* of confidence. Neither husband nor wife should have correspondence which they are afraid to share, but each should feel that it is a happy privilege to give such confidence, though it should in no way be wrenched from them. Such actions as yours, "MARY," have given birth to the proverb, "Familiarity breeds contempt." I am perfectly convinced that that is an un-Christ-like proverb. True Christianity should lead us to keep our courtliest manners, our most graceful speeches, and our gentlest thoughts for those of our own household. Let us all try to keep this in mind at this happy season. Then indeed each home will be a copy of that humble house at Nazareth which sheltered for thirty years Him who is our Pattern from childhood unto death.

Yours faithfully,



American Home Life.—Dr. Horton, the celebrated Congregational minister, says that he found the domestic life in America more ideal than it is generally in England. "Husband and wife are more truly comrades and partners in the business of life; the wife, in the case of ministers, is more distinctly united with her husband's thought and work, and their children are taken into more intimate friendship, and live more in the lives of their parents."

HINTS ON HOME DRESSMAKING.

BY A PRACTICAL DRESSMAKER.

VERY few of us feel like investing in a new dress for outdoor wear during the dark, dull days of December. But we need not add to the inevitable gloom by neglecting our toilette altogether, for there are many ways in which an old dress may be renovated and made to look quite tasteful. Large lace collars and neck-bands of lace, silk, or ribbon give a very pretty finish to an afternoon dress.

One great requisite for this season of the year is a long mantle. Some of our readers will have such an one as will do duty as a waterproof as well, but where it is possible it is best to have a long tweed or other cloth mantle, as well as a loose showerproof or mackintosh cloak, when there is much exposure to the weather. The former are made in a variety of ways. One suitable for a young lady has a yoke of velvet, and is tight-fitting below at the back, while the front hangs loose from the yoke to the bottom of the mantle. The sleeve is wide at the top, and set into the arm in pleats, while the wrist is drawn in, so as to leave a frill about four inches deep Another pattern has a separate skirt set into a band, with a sort of jacket-cape over the back, which is drawn in with a strap of cloth at the waist.

Fig. 42.

Skirts still continue wide, and the bell shape has been almost entirely superseded by the *godet* shape. This, however, has one great drawback, and that is, the *godets* cannot be kept out well unless an interlining of horsehair cloth is used. This interlining makes the skirt heavy, and, we think, uncomfortable to wear. Still, many do not find much objection to it, especially when fashion is a matter of much importance. No trimmings are used on the skirt unless it be made of thin fabrics for party dresses, then insertions and flounces edged with yellow Valenciennes lace are often used, especially for children's dresses.

Fig. 43.

Fashionable sleeves are still cut very wide, but they droop from the shoulders, so that the width is more towards the elbow. The leg-of-mutton sleeve continues to be worn, and also the bishop's sleeve, but perhaps that most generally used is one with a full puff to the elbow and the lower part in coat shape; in some cases this lower piece is made to hook on, thus enabling the sleeve to be transformed into a long or elbow one at pleasure. Very few dress bodies reach below the waist.

Fig. 42. We show here a dress for a girl from six to ten years of age. The body is full below a plain shoulder piece, which forms a yoke. This is covered by a shoulder trimming of velvet, arranged in points. There are also bands of velvet on the skirt and sleeves, and across the front of the bodice. A gored skirt is used, lined throughout with sateen or linenette. Puff sleeves and a waist-band of velvet finish the dress.

Fig. 44.

Fig. 43. This pattern is suitable for a fancy pinafore, and will look very dressy made in a thin material, such as lawn or muslin. The pointed yoke is trimmed with strips of yellow Valenciennes lace, set on lengthways, and the yoke is bordered with lace to match about four inches deep. A frill of lace at the neck and little rosettes or narrow ribbon on the shoulders complete the pinafore. Lace could be used as a frill round the bottom of the skirt, if desired.

Fig. 44. This illustration shows a neck-band. The foundation must be of collar stiffening, covered with a strip of bright-coloured silk, and finished with small rosettes at the back. Lace is laid in folds across the front, and finished with two fan ends, one on either side.

Fig. 45.

Fig. 45. We have here a design for a decorated wall-pocket. The foundation can be made of straw or cardboard, covered with plush or velvet. The front is ornamented with velvet of two shades or colours, and is arranged in three points, with a ruche of ribbon at the edge and tassels at the side. There is also a rosette of ribbon in front. The plush or velvet front can be worked in cross-stitch, or any fancy embroidery in silk or braid.

Flat patterns can be supplied. Fig. 42, 6½d.; fig. 43, 4½d., post free. Address, "M.C. Pattern," 9, Paternoster Row, London, E.C.

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INDEX.

PAGE

Aunt Agatha's Error 23
Autumn Journey, An. M. S. Haycraft 173

Baby's Name, Our. Isabel Maud Pettie 70
Bulgarian Embroidery. Josepha Crane 53

Children's Reading, A Chat about. Isabel S. Robson ... 158
Children's Sunday, The. I. L. Richmond 29
Christmas Helps for Busy Housewives 183
Comradeship in Marriage ... 148
Cradle Songs and Lullabies. Gladys Fenton... 59
Cradles, Some Queer. An Old Nurse 5
CROTCHETY CHILDREN. A Superannuated Governess—
I. The Passionate Child 22
II. The Sulky Child ... 86
III. The Imaginative Child 182
"Cup of Cold Water, A." Jennie M. Bingham 58
Cure for Tired Mothers, A ... 92

Deed, A Kindly 44
"Don'ts" for Young Mothers ... 135

Example Better than Precept. Agnes Giberne 103

Favourite Dish, His 122
First Pocket, The 135
Five o'Clock Tea 185
"FOR RICHER, FOR POORER." E. C. Kenyon 97, 113, 129, 145, 161, 177
Friends of the Foundling, The. May Cumberland 168

Gentlemanly Husbands 20

"Happy and Thankful." Lina Orman Cooper 28
Haven from Home, A. May Cumberland 40
HELPS FOR BUSY HOUSEWIVES 7, 27, 42, 75, 87, 107, 124, 140, 151, 172, 183
HINTS ON HOME DRESSMAKING 16, 32, 48, 64, 80, 96, 112, 128, 144, 160, 176, 187
HINTS ON HOUSEHOLD PROBLEMS. Florence Stacpoole—
I. How to Have a Healthy Home 10
II. How to Improve the Personal Appearance 54
III. Thrift without Discomfort 102
IV. Furnishing in Relation to Income 150
"Humdrum Work." May Kingston 87

PAGE

Is Intemperance Among Women Increasing? Anne W. Richardson, B.A. 74
Is Tea-Drinking Injurious? ... 13

Jam Factory, An Hour in a. F. M. Holmes 114

Kind-hearted Women 119

Learned Ladies of Long Ago ... 170
Lightness and Brightness. F. M. Holmes... 152
Love Conquers All. Edith C. Kenyon... 93
Loving Words 84
Lowly Fidelity. J. R. Miller, D.D. 94

Making Mineral Waters. F. M. Holmes... 120
Mansions *versus* Houses. Lina Orman Cooper 139
Message of the May. Jennie Perrett 108
Miss Pelham's Poor. Jennie Chappell 138
MOTHERS IN COUNCIL. E. M. Waterworth 15, 31, 38, 62, 79, 95, 110, 127, 142, 159, 174, 184
MOTHERS OF OTHER LANDS. B. McCall-Barbour—
I. Mothers of the Red Indian Territory ... 8
II. Mothers of Russia ... 37
III. Mothers of China and Japan 72
IV. Mothers of India ... 104
V. Mothers of Africa ... 136
VI. Mothers of Greenland 165
Mrs. Mason's Mistake 126
Mutes are Taught to Speak, How. Mrs. Charles Garnett 77

Natural Diet for Children, The 75
"NOBLY PLANNED." M. B. Manwell 1, 17, 33, 49, 65, 81
Notable Irish Industry, A. Kate M. Macartney 88

Obedience, About 166
"One of the Least." James Bowker 183

POSSESSIONS, MY HAPPY. Charlotte Skinner—
I. My Motto 12
II. My Proper Place ... 43
III. My Spring Work ... 70
IV. My Garden 106
V. My Ambition 134
VI. My Pocket 171
Poultry Yard, How to Start a ... 45
"Present" of Marriage, The. Lina Orman Cooper 100

Room in Heaven... 154

Safe Retreat, A. Charlotte Skinner 127
Salad Days, Our. Lina Orman Cooper 118

PAGE

Sin of Fretting, The. Helen Hunt 63
"So Fond of Children!" Jennie Chappell 60
Soul or Stomach? Jennie Chappell 90
Squinting, and How it is Cured. Gordon Stables, M.D., R.N. ... 26
Stirring Incident, A 181

Tea-Cups, A Talk About. Sylvester Dowling 167
"That Awkward Phil!" A. Stuart Fletcher 61
Toys, Some Home-made. Jennie Chappell 100

"Uncertain Comforts." Jennie Perrett 40

Value of Trifles, The. Grace H. Dodge 132

Weight of Our Clothing, The. I. L. Richmond 184
What a Baby Did 104
WOMEN OF WORTH—
I. The Mother of President Garfield ... 6
II. Mrs Meredith ... 24
III. Mrs. Leonard's Nurses 56
IV. Louisa M. Alcott ... 91
V. Miss Frances E. Willard 123
VI. Mary L. Whately ... 155
Word for Stepmothers, A. Margaret E. Sangster 140
Word for Worried Women, A. 110
Working Woman's Ideas on Cookery, A. Harriette E. Burch 125

POETRY.

Arm-chair, The Little 63
"As a Little Child." May M. Anderson 92
"At Sunset-Time." M. S. H. ... 21

Christmas Bells 180
"Coming Man, The" 71

"Day of Small Things, The" ... 47
Dropped Stitches 143

Happy Family, A. M.S. Haycraft 133
His Mother's Song 124
Household Duties. George Herbert... 30

Master of the House, The. J. Dennis 107
Meeting Trouble Half-Way ... 30
Mizpah. Shirley Wynne ... 101
Mother's Care, A. Constance Gibson 78
Mother's Room 151

New Year, The 4

Poor Man's Wife, A. J. R. Eastwood 157
"Queen of the Kitchen, The" ... 14

Sunny Hours. Margaret Scott Haycraft 85
Sweetest Things on Earth, The 116

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